

SELECTIVELY MOUNTABLE DECORATIONS FOR A CARRYING CASE**Background of the Invention**

The present invention relates to carrying cases or bags which provide a decorative appearance that can be changed at the option of the owner.

It is well known that people decorate their possessions to fit their mood. To that end, for example, it is known to provide a ladies' handbag with interchangeable decorative display panels. One such product is shown in U.S. Patent No. 6,129,126. However, the panel is intended to cover the entire exterior of the handbag, to suit the fashion objective of the owner.

It would be desirable to provide a carrying case, whether that be a compact disc (CD) wallet, a bowling bag, or a backpack with one or more selectively removable decorations that would cover only a portion of an exterior wall of the carrying case, thus enabling the user to customize the carrying case to suit the mood of the user.

Accordingly, it has been considered desirable to develop a new and improved carrying case which would overcome the foregoing difficulties and meet the above-stated needs and others while providing more advantageous and better results.

Brief Summary of the Invention

In accordance with the present invention, there is disclosed a carrying case comprising an outer enclosure defined by a pair of clam-shell members and a hinge for connecting the pair of clam shell members to each other along a respective edge thereof. A closure member is provided which is secured to at least one of the pair of clamshell members, for selectively securing adjacent edges of the pair of clam shell members to each other. Each of the clam-shell members has an exterior face. A patch of hook and loop material is located on at least one of the exterior faces of the clam-shell members and defines a shape. At least one overlay is provided

which is cut within a perimeter of the shape. The overlay includes opposite front and back sides with a hook and loop material located on the back side for releasable attachment of the overlay to the shape and hence the clam shell exterior face.

In accordance with another aspect of the invention, a carrying case is provided comprising
5 an enclosure defined by at least one wall, the at least one wall having an exterior face. A storage area is defined within said enclosure and an opening is formed in the enclosure. A closure member is mounted to the enclosure for selectively closing the opening. A first fastening means is defined on the exterior face of the at least one wall. A first overlay is provided including a decorative front side and a back side including a second fastening means for releasable
10 attachment of the first overlay to the first fastening means and hence the at least one wall exterior face. The first overlay covers at least a portion of the exterior face and presents a decorative appearance for the at least one wall.

In accordance with yet another aspect of the invention, a carrying case is provided comprising a body having a rear wall, a front wall, and a means for connecting the front and rear
15 walls to each other. A closure is provided for selectively closing an opening defined in the body. The front wall and the rear wall have inner and outer surfaces. A panel comprising a hook and loop material is located on the outer surface of at least one of the front and rear walls. A first overlay is provided having front and back sides including a hook and loop material on the back side for releasable attachment of the first overlay to the panel whereby the first overlay is
20 releasably attached to the panel.

In accordance with still a further aspect of the invention, a carrying case is provided comprising a body having a plurality of interconnected walls which define an interior storage space. A closure is provided for selectively closing an opening defined in the body. The

plurality of interconnected walls each have an outer surface. At least one patch of hook and loop material is located on the outer surface of at least one of the plurality of interconnected walls. A first overlay is provided having front and back sides including a hook and loop material on the back side for releasable attachment of the first overlay to the at least one patch.

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Brief Description of the Drawings

The invention may take physical form in certain parts and arrangements of parts, several preferred embodiments of which are described in the specification and illustrated in the accompanying drawings, which form a part hereof and wherein:

FIGURE 1 is an exploded perspective view of a carrying case, in the form of a CD wallet,
10 shown in the closed position in accordance with a first embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 2 is a bottom plan view of an overlay in accordance with the present invention;

FIGURE 3 is a top plan view of another overlay in accordance with the present invention;

FIGURE 4 is a top plan view of the carrying case of FIGURE 1 shown in the open
position;

15 FIGURE 5 is a perspective view of the carrying case of FIGURE 1 shown in the open
position;

FIGURE 6 is a perspective view of another carrying case shown in the closed position
in accordance with a second embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 7 is a perspective view of a carrying case, in the form of a backpack, in
20 accordance with a third embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 8 is a perspective view of a carrying case, in the form of a purse, in accordance
with a fourth embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 9 is a perspective view of still another carrying case, in the form of a bowling

bag, in accordance with a fifth embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 10 is a perspective view of a carrying case, in the form of a messenger bag, in accordance with a sixth embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 11 is a perspective view of still another carrying case, such as a photographer's gadget bag, shown in a closed condition in accordance with a seventh embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 12 is a reduced perspective view of the carrying case of FIGURE 11 shown in the open position;

FIGURE 13 is a perspective view of yet another carrying case, such as a lunch bag, in accordance with an eighth embodiment of the present invention; and,

FIGURE 14 is an elevational view of a still yet another arrangement of a carrying case, such as a pouch, in accordance with a ninth embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Invention

Referring now to the drawings, wherein the showings are for the purposes of illustrating several preferred embodiments of the invention only and not for purposes of limiting same, the embodiments of the present invention will now be explained in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

With reference now to FIGURE 1, a carrying case for compact discs (CDs), DVDs, or the like, is illustrated at 10. The carrying case 10 can be made out of, for example, nylon and includes a closure member 12 in the form of zipper tracks sewn into an outer enclosure or casing 14, as illustrated by seams 16. The outer enclosure 14 of the carrying case 10 comprises a pair of clam shell members 18, 20. In FIGURE 1, the clam shell members 18, 20 are shown in the closed position and held together by the closure member 12. The clam shell members 18, 20,

when closed, fit atop each other so that interfacing edges 22, 24 are adjacent each other. In the closed position or mode, interior spaces 26, 28 (see FIGURE 5) defined by clam shell members 18, 20 combine to form an interior carrying compartment defined inside the outer enclosure 14. The interior carrying compartment can be used to carry a variety of articles. For example, as seen in FIGURE 5, compact disks (not shown) can be carried in sleeves 36 secured to a hinge 38. As mentioned, the means for closing the pair of clam shell members 18, 20 can include the zipper track 12 and a zipper pull 13. It is to be appreciated that other types of closing mechanisms can be utilized, such as, hook and loop, ties, snaps, hook and eye, buttons, and the like.

The hinge 38 of the case 10 includes an axis 40 about which the sleeves 36 and the clam shell members 18, 20 rotate. With reference now to FIGURE 4, the clam shell members 18, 20 include exterior faces 42, 44. Exterior face 44 includes a patch of material 46 thereon. The patch 46 includes a hook and loop material 48. The hook and loop material 48 can, for example, be sewn in place by stitching as at 49 or attached by conventional adhesives. The patch 46 can be generally centered within a perimeter of the exterior face 42. With reference again to FIGURE 1, the case 10 includes a selectively removable overlay 58 having a size cut within a perimeter 50 of the shape 46. The overlay 58 includes a front side 60 and a back side 62 (see FIGURE 2). The back side 62 includes hook and loop material 64 sewn in place by stitching 66 for releasable attachment of the overlay 58 to the patch 46. Attaching the overlay 58 to the patch 46 secures the overlay 58 to the carrying case 10 outer enclosure 14. It is to be appreciated from FIGURES 1 and 4 that the patch is indented into the exterior face 42 of the case 10. In one form, the patch 46 and overlay 58 can have a substantially circular configuration (see FIGURES 1 and 4). A thickness t of the overlay 58 is generally the same as the depth of indentation of the patch 46, whereby the overlay 58 is substantially flush with the exterior face 42 when secured to the patch

46.

Referring now to FIGURE 3, another overlay 68 is shown in which a front side 70 of the overlay includes a decorative display 74 thereon. A back side (not shown) includes hook and loop material sewn in place by stitching 76 for releasable attachment of the overlay 68 to the shape 46.

Referring to FIGURE 6, a second embodiment of a carrying case is illustrated in accordance with the invention. In this embodiment, like components are identified by like numerals with a primed (') suffix and new components are identified by new numerals. A carrying case 10' includes a pair of clam shell members 18', 20' which are selectively closed by a zipper 12'. A hinge 38' is also provided. An outer surface or exterior face 42' of the case 10' is shown. A generally rectangular panel 86 of material is secured to the exterior face 42' of the carrying case 10'. The panel has a corresponding perimeter 90 and includes hook and loop material 92. The hook and loop material 92 can, for example, be sewn in place by stitching 94. A series of overlays 58', 68', 78 are shown in a variety of configurations. As discussed above, the overlays 58', 68', 78 include hook and loop material (not shown in FIGURE 6) on their back sides. It is to be appreciated that any number of different geometric shapes can be utilized in conjunction with any number of different sized overlays. Additionally, the overlays 58', 68', 78 can be arranged in a multitude of orientations with respect to the panel 86.

Referring now to FIGURE 7, a third embodiment of a carrying case in the form of a backpack 100 is shown. The carrying case 100 includes a front wall 102, side walls 104, 106, and a rear wall 108. A base wall 109 is provided which, along with side walls 104, 106, connects the front wall 102 and the rear wall 108 to form an enclosure 101. A storage area (not shown) is defined within the enclosure 101. The backpack 100 includes a second enclosure 110

defined by a front wall 112, a pair of side walls 114, 116, and the front wall 102 of the first enclosure 101. In addition, a top wall 118 is provided which is arranged above the side walls 114, 116 and front wall 112. An opening, not shown, is formed by the second enclosure 110. A closure member, for example a zipper 122, is mounted to the enclosure 101 for allowing selective closing and opening of the enclosure 101. A second closure member 124 is mounted to the second enclosure 110 for allowing selective closing and opening of the second enclosure 110. Pull tabs 123, 125 can be connected to zippers 122, 124 to assist in grasping and pulling same.

Included on the front wall 102 is an exterior face 128. A panel or shape 130 is defined on the exterior face 128 by a layer of hook and loop material 132. The panel 130 is shown to have a rectangular configuration with a long dimension thereof being oriented widthwise of the case 100. It is to be appreciated that any number of other panel configurations can be included on the exterior face 128 of the front wall 102 and/or other walls.

As shown in FIGURE 7, a plurality of overlays 138, each including a decorative front side 140 and a back side including hook and loop material (not shown) are provided for selective mounting of the overlays 138 to the panel 130. In the described attachment position, the overlays 138 are attached to the exterior face 128 of the enclosure 101. The overlays 138 can cover a portion of, or all of, the panel 130 and present a decorative appearance for the exterior face 128. As discussed above, the overlays 138 can be of a variety of different shapes and sizes. It is to be appreciated that some overlays can be smaller than the panel 130 and have shapes different from the panel 130. In this way, the wearer of the backpack can change or customize its appearance to fit his or her mood, as long as suitable overlays are provided for this purpose.

The backpack 100 also includes a pair of carrying straps 144, 146. As shown in FIGURE

7, the carrying straps 144, 146 are fixed to the rear wall 108 of the enclosure 101. The carrying straps 144, 146 can be looped around the shoulders of a carrier, wherein the case 100 is carried as a backpack. The backpack 100 can also include a handle 148 attached to the rear wall 108 of the enclosure 101.

5 Referring now to FIGURE 8, another embodiment of a carrying case is shown. In this embodiment, the carrying case is in the form of a ladies' purse 200 which includes an enclosure 201 defined by a front wall 202, side walls 204, 206, and a rear wall 208. A base wall 209 is provided which, along with side walls 204, 206, connects the front wall 202 and the rear wall 208 to form enclosure 201. A storage area (not shown) is defined within the purse 200. A
10 closure member (not shown) can be mounted to the enclosure 201 for allowing selective closing and opening of the enclosure 201.

Included on the front wall 202 is an exterior face 228. A panel or shape 230 is defined on the exterior face 228 by a patch of hook and loop material 232. The shape 230 is shown as having a circular configuration. It is to be appreciated that any number of other configurations
15 can be included on the exterior face 228 of the front wall 202 and/or other walls. As discussed above, overlays can be selectively attached to the panel of hook and loop material 232 to customize the purse to the user's liking. If desired, the panel 230 can be indented into the exterior face 228 of the front wall 202.

The carrying case 200 can also include a pair of carrying straps 264, 266. As illustrated,
20 the carrying strap 264 is affixed to a top edge 268 of the front wall 202 and carrying strap 266 is affixed to a top edge 270 of the rear wall 208. The carrying straps 164, 166 form a handle which can be grasped by the user.

Referring now to FIGURE 9, another version of a carrying case is shown. In this

embodiment, the carrying case is in the form of a bowler's bag 300 which includes an enclosure 301 defined by a front wall 302, side walls 304, 306, and a rear wall 308. A base wall 309 is provided which, along with side walls 304, 306, connects the front wall 302 and the rear wall 308 to form enclosure 301. A storage area (not shown) is defined within the enclosure 301. A closure member (not shown) can be mounted to the enclosure 301 for allowing selective closing and opening of the enclosure 301.

The front wall 302 includes an exterior face 328. A panel or strip 330 is defined on the exterior face 328 by a layer of hook and loop material 332. The panel 330 is shown as a rectangular configuration with a long dimension thereof being oriented widthwise of the case 300. It is to be appreciated that any number of panels or strips 330 can be included on the exterior face 328 of the front wall 302 and/or other walls. As discussed above, selected overlays can be attached to the layer of hook and loop material 332 to customize it to the desires of the user.

The bowler's bag 300 also includes a pair of carrying straps 364, 366. These can be affixed, respectively, to a top edge 368 of the front wall 302 and a top edge 370 of the rear wall 308. The carrying straps 364, 366 form a handle which can be grasped by the carrier or hung over the shoulder of the carrier.

Referring now to FIGURE 10, a carrying case formed in accordance with a sixth embodiment is illustrated. The carrying case is in the form of a messenger's bag 400 and includes a body or enclosure 401 defined by a front wall 402, side walls 404, 406, and a rear wall (not shown). A base wall 409 is provided which, along with side walls 404, 406, connects the front wall 402 and the rear wall to form the enclosure 401. A storage area (not shown) is defined within the enclosure 401. A flap 410 which is hingedly connected to a top edge (not shown) of

the rear wall is provided for closing the opening in the body 401. A closure member 412 is provided for securing the flap 410 to the body 401. The closure 412, as shown, can include a tab 414 and buckle 416 arrangement. The tab 414 can be connected to a bottom edge 411 of the flap 410 and the buckle 416 is affixed to the front wall 402. It is to be appreciated that the closure member 412 may take any number of configurations.

The flap 410 includes an inner surface (not shown) and an outer surface 428. A plurality of spots or patches 430 are defined on the exterior face 428 by hook and loop material 432. The spots 430 are shown as small circles in FIGURE 10. It is to be appreciated that any number of configurations or shapes of such hook and loop material can be included on the exterior face 428 of the flap 410 and/or other walls. One or more overlays can be affixed to the hook and loop material 432 of one or more such patches or shapes 430.

The messenger's bag or carrying case 400 also includes a carrying strap 444. The carrying strap 444 is fixed at each end 446, 448 to the side walls 404, 406 of the enclosure 401. The carrying strap 444 can be looped around the shoulders of a carrier, wherein the case 400 is carried as a typical messenger bag.

Referring now to FIGURES 11 and 12, another version of a carrying case formed in accordance with a seventh embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. The carrying case can be in the form of a photographer's gadget bag 500 which includes a body or enclosure 501 defined by a front wall 502, side walls 504, 506, and a rear wall 508. A base wall 509 is provided which, along with side walls 504, 506, connects the front wall 502 and the rear wall 508 to form the enclosure 501. A storage area 503 is defined within the enclosure 501. A flap 510 can be connected to a top edge 570 of the rear wall 508 is provided for closing the opening 503 in the body 501.

The flap 510 includes an inner surface (not shown) and an outer surface 528. A panel or strip 530 is defined on the exterior face 528 by a layer of hook and loop material 532. The panel 530 is shown as a rectangular configuration with a long dimension thereof being oriented widthwise of the flap 510. It is to be appreciated that any number of panels or strips 530 can be included on the exterior face 528 of the flap 510 and/or the other walls. As discussed above, selected overlays can be attached to the layer of hook and loop material 532 of the panel 530 to customize it to the desires of the user.

The bag 500 also includes a carrying strap 544. The carrying strap 544 can be affixed, respectively, at each end 546, 548 to the side walls 504, 506 of the enclosure 501. The carrying strap 544 can be looped around the shoulders of a carrier, wherein the bag 500 is carried along the side of the user.

Referring now to FIGURE 13, an eighth embodiment of a carrying case formed in accordance with the present invention is illustrated. A carrying case in the form of a lunch bag 600 includes a body or enclosure 601 defined by a front wall 602, side walls 604, 606, and a rear wall 608. A base wall 609 is provided which, along with side walls 604, 606, connects the front wall 602 and the rear wall 608 to form the enclosure 601. A storage area (not shown) is defined within the enclosure 601. A closure member, for example a zipper 622, can be mounted to the enclosure 601 for allowing selective closing and opening of the enclosure 601. A flap 610 which is connected to a top edge (not shown) of the rear wall 608 is provided for closing the opening in the body 601.

The front wall 602 includes an inner surface (not shown) and an outer surface 628. A panel or shape 630 is defined on the exterior face 628 by a hook and loop material 632. The shape 630 is shown as having a circular configuration. It is to be appreciated that any number

of other configurations can be included on the exterior face 628 of the front wall 602 and/or other walls. As discussed above, overlays can be selectively affixed to the panel of hook and loop material 632 to customize the bag 600 to the user's liking.

The bag 600 can also include a handle 650. As illustrated, the handle 650 is fixed at each end 652, 654 to the flap 610. The handle 650 can be grasped by the carrier, wherein the case 600 is carried along the side of the user.

Referring now to FIGURE 14, a carrying case formed in accordance with a ninth embodiment of the present invention is there illustrated. The carrying case is in the form of a pouch 700 and includes a body or enclosure 701 defined by a front wall 702 and a rear wall 708. The front wall 702 and the rear wall 708 are connected together by suitable conventional means to form enclosure 701. A storage area (not shown) is defined within the enclosure 701. A closure member, for example a zipper 722, can be mounted to the enclosure 701 for allowing selective closing and opening of the enclosure 701.

The front wall 702 includes an exterior or outer face 728. A panel or strip 730 is defined on the exterior face 728 by a layer of hook and loop material 732. The panel 730 is shown as a rectangular configuration with a long dimension thereof being oriented widthwise of the case 700. It is to be appreciated that any number of panels or strips 730 can be included on the exterior face 728 of the front wall 702 and/or other walls. As previously discussed, selected overlays can be affixed to the layer of hook and loop material 732 of the panel 730 to customize it to the desires of the user.

The carrying case 700 also includes a pair of clasps 740, 742 which can be selectively attached to another compatible case (not shown).

The invention thus relates to the practice of applying, adding, and/or exchanging,

selected overlays to a display portion on a carrying case. One arrangement allows for selective mounting of a disk like overlay into a compatible indented shape or opening in the outer surface of the case in order to change the style of the case. Another arrangement allows for selective mounting of one or more overlays onto, for example, a panel or strip on the outer surface of the case in order to decorate the case. Still another arrangement allows for selective mounting of overlays onto a plurality of spots or patches in order to change the style and/or to decorate the case.

The invention particularly relates to providing a hook and loop material, for example VELCRO, arrangements on an outer surface of the carrying case and on one side of the overlay(s), whereby the overlay(s) can be selectively mounted (i.e. releasably attached) to the outer surface of the case. It is to be appreciated, however, that other known types of fasteners or fastening means can be used to selectively secure a decorative layer to a substrate, such as snaps or the like.

The invention has been described with reference to several preferred embodiments. Obviously, alterations and modifications will occur to others upon a reading and understanding of the specification. It is intended to include all such modifications and alterations insofar as they come within the scope of the appended claims or the equivalents thereof.